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FOREIGN NEWS ON APPLES

THE APPLE DEMAND SITUATION IN BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND

A recent investigation of the apple demand situation in Birmingham, England, shows that, like London and Southampton, Birmingham has a distinct preference for the very small sizes, according to a report received in the Foreign Service of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics from Mr. Edwin Smith, the Department's Fruit Specialist in Europe. Birmingham is reputed to be one of the most prosperous manufacturing centers in England at the present time. This is due to the fact that the English motor and cycle industries, which are centered mainly in Birmingham, have been increasing their output annually and seem to be on a firm foundation.

The Birmingham market has a special preference for sizes 234's and 252's in boxed varieties. This market draws its supplies from all of the British port auctions, Liverpool, Southampton, and London being the main auction sources. At the time of Mr. Smith's visit, February 12, the Birmingham trade was buying boxed Winesaps from London instead of from Liverpool because the London price on Fancy, 175/216 sizes, was 11/6 (\$2.80) while Liverpool prices for the same size and grade ranged from 12/- to 12/3 (\$2.92 to \$2.98). This fact emphasizes the fluidity of the apple supply situation in British markets. The excellent transportation facilities available throughout the United Kingdom makes it practically impossible for one market to remain oversupplied while others are undersupplied. As a result prices on any particular variety in the various port markets usually tend to equalize, although prices between particular port markets at a particular moment may vary considerably, due to temporary uneven supplies.

Investigation into the slow sale of Oregon Newtowns and Virginia Albemarle Pippins this season developed very little new information, states Mr. Smith. The wholesale merchants as a rule merely stated that these varieties had not been in strong demand thus far this winter and that the demand had been for red apples. One merchant, however, went so far as to say that Newtowns had been "too hard for the teeth" and that the people want a softer apple. Another thought that it was a matter of price and that this winter people would buy red apples as well as Newtowns if they could get them for less money.

The general complaint about the slow apple trade this season was expressed almost as vehemently in prosperous Birmingham as it is in some of the districts such as Manchester, Bradford, and Sheffield, where trade is depressed. However, a feeling of optimism was apparent when the subject of late winter and spring markets was referred to. The basis of this optimism was the outlook for reduced shipments from Australia.

Scald observations

Mr. Smith points out that while in Birmingham he observed some very serious development of scald in York Imperials packed in shredded oiled paper. In some of the barrels this might be attributed to poor distribution of paper, but in others the paper seemed to have been very well distributed throughout the barrels. The relatively few instances of scald development in apples packed in oiled paper, however, counteracted many instances where prevention had been successful, states Mr. Smith. As a result, some merchants expressed the opinion that the use of shredded oiled paper was of no benefit in preventing scald.

Proceeding to Liverpool the next day, February 13, Mr. Smith observed several carloads of Virginia York Imperial apples packed in shredded oiled paper which arrived in perfect condition and were among the finest Yorks seen this season. Very few York Imperials not packed in oiled paper were on the Liverpool market, though one or two carloads had arrived, also quite free from scald. The occasional discovery of scald in barrels using oiled paper while no scald is apparent in some barrels not using paper has tended to cloud the minds of the buyers as regards the true merit of shredded oiled paper in scald prevention.

Rhode Island Greenings continue to arrive in British markets in good condition. Thus far this season Mr. Smith has had occasion to make but one observation relative to the development of scald in that variety.

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